

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

WHILE IN SESSION
STATE CAPITOL
JUNEAU, AK 99801
(907) 465-3704



•
WHILE IN ANCHORAGE
1500 W BENSON BLVD
ANCHORAGE, AK 99503
(907) 269-0169

EDUCATION

ETHICS

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

JUDICIARY

TRANSPORTATION

SENATOR Löki Gale Tobin
Senate Education Committee Chair

September 25, 2024

Commissioner Ryan Anderson
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, AK 99811-2500

Commissioner Anderson,

In the wake of the recent tragic pedestrian deaths in Anchorage, I respectfully ask the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) to work together to identify short-, mid-, and long-term solutions to protect everyday Alaskans using non-motorized means of transportation. On behalf of the people who live, work, and play in the neighborhoods that comprise North Anchorage, I volunteer to help solicit feedback from vulnerable road users that will be invaluable as we work together to identify solutions to allow vehicles to move safely around Anchorage while protecting those whose movement might be on foot or a bicycle.

As you know, proven tools and techniques can be used to protect public safety, including improved street lighting and stepped-up enforcement of texting-while-driving prohibitions, speed limits, and forced adherence to other traffic rules. I hope those and other options are on the table as you determine the best way to address the increase in pedestrian deaths in Anchorage. As you examine what to do, I encourage you to contact local community councils and nonprofit organizations for their expertise in best supporting our houseless and homeless neighbors, as they comprise many of our highly vulnerable road users.

While traffic calming and enforcement have been proven effective, nothing will fundamentally change unless people change their behavior. As an avid bicyclist, I know how dangerous the highways are throughout much of Anchorage. Changing the speed limit won't work if everyone continues to drive at the speeds they are familiar with and at speeds seemingly encouraged by the available infrastructure. Additionally, the recent reporting highlights the need for more frequent designated crosswalks and built environments that ensure pedestrians are visible to motorists. I support the Department's efforts to raise public awareness about pedestrian safety. I will use the resources of my office to highlight those efforts, especially as winter approaches and there is dwindling daylight.

On the government side of the equation, I ask the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to carefully consider legislation to codify a statewide Complete Streets policy and advocate for the additional funding needed to protect public safety through quality non-motorized transportation planning. Please let me know if there are any

statutory changes I can help guide through the legislative process during the upcoming 34th Alaska State Legislature.

Finally, many of the recent tragic deaths occurred as pedestrians were trying to cross the Seward Highway, which dissects neighborhoods and infrastructure with, at times, as many as eight lanes of high-speed traffic. I live in and represent areas of Anchorage that are greatly affected by the Seward and Glenn Highways and many other heavily trafficked roadways. No one should die or get injured simply trying to cross these grotesquely large roads, bifurcating our urban communities. Pedestrians have the legal right to cross roadways. As Alaskans, we should resist the urge to turn Anchorage into some metropolitan maze of highways where being a pedestrian is discouraged and, in some cases, illegal.

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of the people of Alaska. Please let me know if I can help prevent further pedestrian deaths in Anchorage.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Löki Gale Tobin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sen. Löki Gale Tobin
Alaska State Legislature

CC: Anchorage Mayor Suzanne LaFrance
Anchorage Police Chief Sean Case
Alaska Department of Public Safety Commissioner James Cockrell
Senate Transportation Committee Chair Sen. James Kaufman
House Transportation Committee Chair Rep. Kevin McCabe
Tyson Gallagher, Chief of Staff to Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy
Downtown Community Council Chair Silvia Villamedes
South Addition Community Council Chair John Thurber
Fairview Community Council Chair James Thornton
Mountain View Community Council Chair Phil Cannon
Spenard Community Council Chair Sarah Preskitt
Northeast Community Council Chair Ron Meehan